

A FINAL
ANSWER
TO THE
COUNTRY GENTLEMAN;
AND
OFFICER.



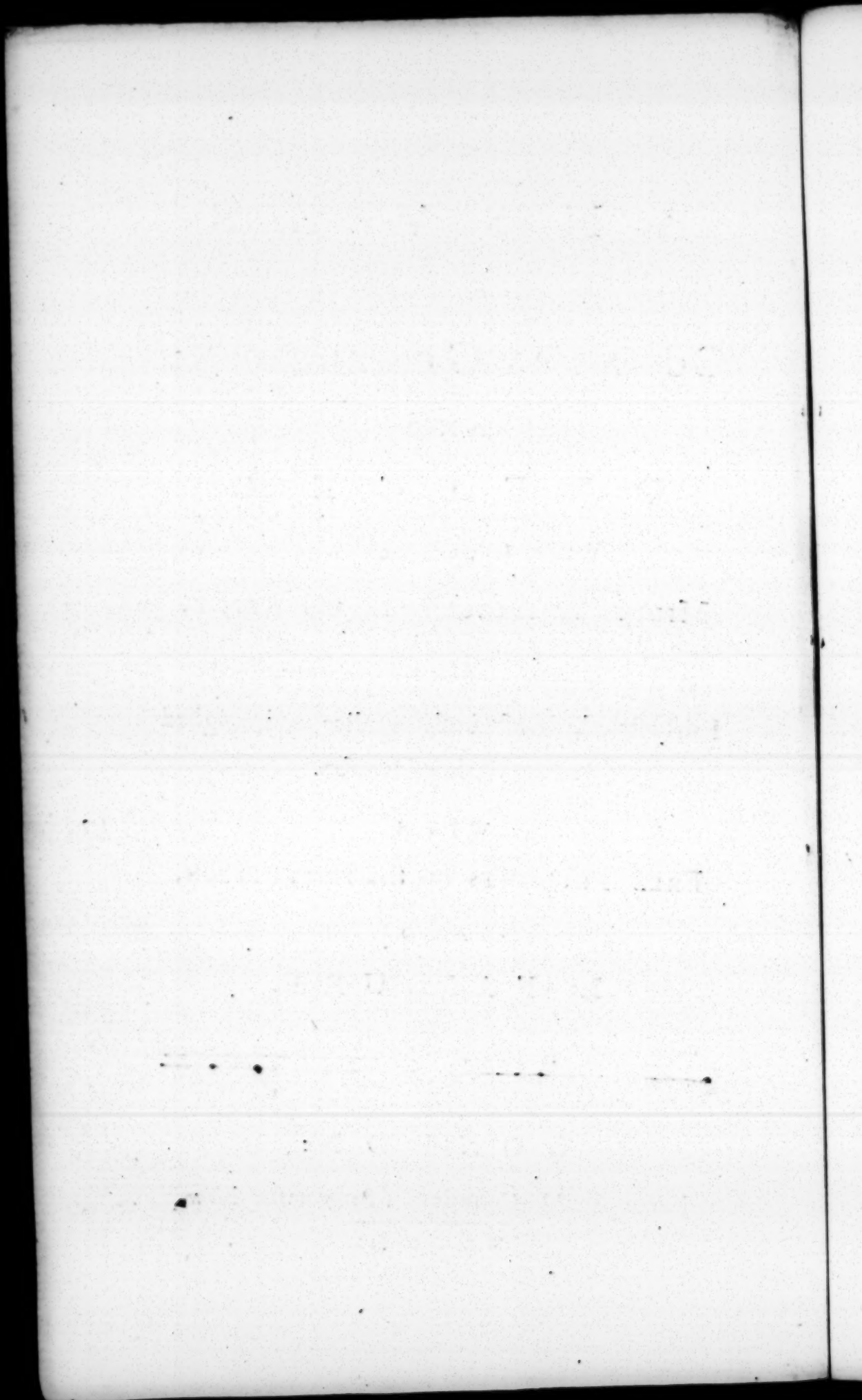
In which the
MILITARY ARGUMENTS and REPLY,
ARE
Fairly stated, divested of Prejudice, and weighed
in the Scale of Reason.

WITH
FREE THOUGHTS on the EXPEDITION,
AND
Its FAILURE.

L O N D O N:

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A F I N A L
A N S W E R, &c.

THE affair of Rochfort has not yet been stated clearly or candidly. Britain is interested in the truth, and we have means to know it: these have not been yet used rightly; but let us do it now: the whole transaction is before us; and tho' they have perhaps been influenced or interested men who relate the incidents, we may employ that light to useful knowledge.

Of the two most regarded, one declares himself an officer, and therefore cannot be unprejudiced; the other owns he writes in haste; and he therefore cannot be considerate.

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Beside, they both are partially attached. Their wranglings are concerning men, not things : but we have more important objects. The prosperity of this kingdom depends upon the subject here disputed : and there is no man, howsoever great or good, whose character or being weighs an atom, ballanced against the welfare of a people.

How shall that people know the truth ?—there is but one way—by their own enquiries. These men, tho' actuated by lesser passions, yet feel also this higher principle. They have between them given us all the facts ; nor can I say they have given any thing beside : for tho' they harshly charge one another ; they both are men of honour.

This truth, scattered as it there lies among the chaff of words ; and obscured by the dark clouds of animosity, may be collected and cleared : this we propose to do ; and few words will contain it. That done, there will be no need of eloquence or wit ; ridiculous harangue, or ill-placed raillery. The plainest words will best express it ; and the humblest capacity so will apprehend it truly.

Roch-

Rochfort was destined to be attacked ; the advantage would have been very great, and the hope lay in secrecy. A plan was formed by which it might be taken ; and the secret was inviolably preserved.

This vindicates the minister : it does him honour : and this is not to be disputed.

Those who had charge of the execution, required sufficient men, proper artillery, and careful preparation.

In this there was nothing in the least improper. They had not the men they desired, the cannon they thought necessary, nor the implements in such order as they wish'd.

This can no more be denied, than can the other. Nay, we must go farther : they might have had all these. The country could have afforded, and the ships have carried them : therefore they are not without excuse.

The diffidence which these imperfections (real or fancied) raised in their breasts, pre-

vented the attempt : but if it be asked, whether or not had an attempt been made with the force they carried, it would have succeeded ? certainly it would : at least, so far as human reason can judge of certainty, in things not tried. The supposed and the real state of the place declare this ; the original intelligence, and the accounts since received.

This is the plain, and this the whole state of the case : why then employ pamphlets, volumes, in the illustration. The minister who laid the plan was wise and good ; but not above the reach of error : and the officers who undertook the charge were brave ; but they had too much caution.

We shall all learn by the misfortune : the great to act on moderated principles ; and the public to judge with candor.

Tis not the first time we have felt the disadvantage of sending out a force just equal to the expedition. Byng perished for his too quick sense of this ; and (let who will be offended at the truth) Britain lost by it Minorca.

Then

For the future, when 'tis in our power, let us over match the enemy : and let those who have command be sensible it is so. There is a spirit from known superiority which enflames the fury of the attack ; and gives the success, that it expects so confidently.

While ministers attend to this, (if men like me may talk to ministers) let officers, rather than deceive their country's expectation, dare even where they think it rashness. The greatest victories have been won by such a conduct : and the whole world is now sensible Rochfort might have been carried in that manner ; and France depress'd for years.

As the purpose of our minister was just in the appointed service of these officers ; his conduct since their return from the expedition has been most honourable. Some have insulted him upon this head : but censure never was more unfair.

'Twas plain the miscarriage of the enterprise was neither owing to the strength of the enemy, nor our weakness ; but singly to the
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the generals not having attempted it. It could not be, but that the king, (not influenced by the clamours of a people, but by his own discernment) would express some resentment. These officers alone could feel it; for none else were culpable: and royal anger is not expressed in secret.

Many who dare to judge of what they cannot know, impute to ministers the acts of kings: and here it was most plain the minister would be so censured: because his own reputation might and would suffer some stain, if theirs stood clear.

Therefore perhaps he proposed the board of enquiry: it was appointed of men, whose honour and whose candour sanctify'd their opinions; and they plainly laid the fault where it was.

The officers have felt their sovereign's displeasure; mildly expressed, for he is all mildness: and, if I may judge their conduct, remaining in his service, they own the justice of it. The gentleness of the royal displeasure shews the king thought them guilty of an error only; not chargeable with guilt or infamy: and so much they will not I think dispute.

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This stamped the royal seal of approbation upon the conduct of the proposer of the plan : and what has he desired more ! possessed of ministerial power, has he proceeded one step farther ? adored in the house, has he endeavoured to engage upon the cause, the attention of that powerful body ? has he employed the influence his virtues give him there, to vindicate himself farther ; or to injure them ? satisfied with the royal approbation, he has disclaimed all farther question : and much more than acquitted by his conscience, he despises the assaults of ignorance, and the shafts of envy.

I do not know that he has the power of ministers in that extent wherein some have possessed, and bad men will wish always to possess it ; but the smallest ministerial power is very formidable. He has not in the least employed it in this instance, and they are most unjust, who have applied to his conduct the name of persecution.

If it be asked, whether by this opinion of the minister, I think him, or would have others think he is above the reach of error, or free from faults ; I answer, that I think
him

him man, and nothing more. I who do him this justice as a minister, could as a man, charge him severely, nay unanswerably : but disclaiming and disdaining personal rancour, where the interests of my country are concerned, I pay him this free tribute. I doubt not but he will hereafter see his error, and be more fair to others.

Human frailties are inseparable from human nature, and even in public as well as private occurrences, this great man, (however, worthily he claims the character) is not exempt from them.

Concerning Rochfort, tho' the intelligence he had was certainly sufficient ; more might have been obtained without alarming the enemy, or endangering the secret : and it would have given to those in command that confidence, which, and which alone, was wanted to compleat the project.

Two more batallions, and some battering cannon, might have been allowed without any great inconvenience ; and tho' they were not wanted, nor would have been used, yet they would have had the same good effect. Thus a too delicate policy, became destructive, and a too perfect knowledge had as bad consequences, as could have flowed from ignorance. By the errors of such men we learn humility. As by their general conduct, and in their proper characters

acters we read the power of knowledge and the dignity of virtue.

'Twill be descending greatly from the subject, to speak of those who have so warmly written of it : but as they are both of rank and consequence, above the little state of authorship, perhaps there may be some use in the free thoughts of one, who neither courts nor fears them.

The public know what notice it is worth, when beggars, or when hirelings attack the higher characters ; or meddle in transactions as much above their comprehension, as their station : but here it is otherwise. We plainly see they both have the advantages of knowledge, and superior information, to the vulgar. They are understood the one to plead his own cause in his proper voice ; the other to be connected with the minister, informed by him of things not generally known, and to write under the direction, or shall we call it subject to the admonition of a third person, distinguished by his talents, knowledge and address.

Their arguments are therefore read with attention ; and the facts would have been undisputed, had they not disputed them with
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one another. When such are combatants, nations are the theatres ; and the spectators a whole people. They will receive impressions from the argument, and think the kingdom, as indeed it is, interested in the decision.

If I mistake the persons, the public mistakes with me ; and they are ignorant of one another : if they be really those they are thought, one must lament, that he who might so well EXCUSE his conduct, should undertake the impossible task of JUSTIFYING it : and we must mix astonishment with indignation against him, who, with so much truth on his side, could descend to cavil ; and with so much power of reasoning, could admit so low a thing as as raillery.

Indeed, I wish this were the whole charge ; but he has faults nothing can justify ; and which the excuse aggravates.

To quote unfairly is of all reproaches the greatest and the bitterest to a writer. Mistakes of other kinds betray his judgment, but the attack from this lies deeper. Could the cause this gentleman undertook need such arts to support it ? Or was it right so
great

great a character as he had to defend, should be sustain'd by answerable arguments.

He wrote, he says, in haste, and so made many errors!—but why did he write in haste? what influenced? Or who desired him? The cause was of importance to require deliberation. Did he suppose the character of the minister required such sudden justification! there was no need of haste for this. Before he cleared it 'twas above suspicion. A virtuous anger hurry'd him too far: and men will learn, that they who write in haste should read at leisure.

Doubtless, there is candour, truth and modesty, in owning through several pages *blunder's*, and mistakes; but it would have been better not to fall into them: and however harsh it sounds, it must be said, after a fault is proved, there is but little merit in confession. Who compelled his haste? Or did he consider, that (although not the character of the minister) the honour of a soldier, much more dear, and the welfare of the public, infinitely more important, in some degree depended on it!

We own the true nature of Bonville's evidence was never fully known, till this

author gave us the original letter he wrote to explain the passage. It strengthens ; it confirms ; it convinces—alas ! that he who had these advantages should descend to think of assisting his just cause, and his own strong manner elsewhere of supporting it, by cavil and by misrepresentation.

The people of Britain are discerning, plain and honest : they reverence in others those qualities which do honour to themselves, and he betrays his cause who has recourse to worse.

We own this writer is possessed of talents, the public pays him that tribute universally ; and it is just to say, that to a command of words, clear reasoning, and a masterly arrangement of his arguments, he adds the force of wit : he is in this case also happy, in having the best side of the cause, and the most popular——why then, with these fair advantages would he forget himself so far, as to call in the arts of weak men, who defend bad causes ; seeking strength where it was not, while he had sufficient in his hand ; and calling in railing where he had just argument.

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If it could be any alleviation, the fault is hardly mutual: the antagonist who undertook too much, has rarely fallen into these ungentlemen-like errors; and faults in one do not excuse them in another. These are the objections to the manner of the dispute: the facts are obvious: but in the arguments, the country gentleman triumphs before his victory.

The point rests here. What degree of palliation the error of the generals in not making the attack admits from circumstances? and it stands thus between them. The officer adds to the account of the force within the place, that numerous train of sailors, anchor-smiths, and working builders, and the other hardy people employed about a yard and arsenal: the country gentleman laughs at this, and bids him add the monks and friars: but certainly there is no error in the officer; nor sense, (though there may be wit) in the answer.

Whether or not the artillery was sufficient, is the great question. The officer denies it: the country gentleman asserts: but flat denials, or bold assertions, weigh nothing in the scale of candour.

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The country gentleman thinks the artillery and other requisites were sufficient to have made attacks in four different manners, and four different places at one time. I will not try to expose him to ridicule, for I regard and honour him: his faults are spots in the bright face of merit; hid in the radiance, except when sought by a close examination. Our men were not enough to be divided: and that attempt would have laid them open to destruction.

Whether the artillery were sufficient is answered easily. Even Colonel Clarke has called it a small quantity: and there is little candour in supposing the officers engaged in this undertaking, could fall into the errors, the caution against which is alledged as a reason why they had no more.

This appears most plainly from the writing of the antagonist officer: for the pamphlet appears to be really his; and it shews good sense and masterly discernment: and tho' the cause he undertook be evidently the weaker, 'tis no little strength it has received from his arguments: nor are his answers to the crude imaginations of a country gentleman regulating attacks, and directing armies

mies without their weight as well as severity.

I should think, he who proposed to land the troops under the fire of the bomb-ketches, either did not know there were but two such in the fleet; or chose the public should not know it. Nor indeed could a severer raillery have been unfair, upon so wild a thought as the bringing up of two field-pieces, to destroy a sluice protected by the cannon of a regular fortification.

That the mortars in the expedition were not enough for some very essential services, appears even from their mouths, who least favour the cause of the land commanders: and perhaps there is too much justice in the officers supposition, that the plan was changed without the means being altered.

Examples of former vain attempts, we own, plead nothing: tho' we cannot agree with the country gentleman, that an officer's discovering reading is a subject for raillery or insult.

If we would plead examples of things hazardous, let us take the latest and the boldest: and from the prince of Prussia learn,

learn, that he who dares every thing may hope every thing.

Thus stands the case here considered; and thus all men of candour will now see it. Rochfort might have been taken with the force that was sent: but it would have been taken, if we had sent more.

If there be any thing that farther interests the British public in the question now; it is, that Rochfort still remains as open as it was; that France, now levelled with the dust in Germany, will be daunted and dispirited every where; that England, with recovered spirit, has sufficient strength; and that the proper conduct is not to combat arguments, but enemies; the just and final answer will be to take it now.

F I N I S.

